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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN NUGGETS -- SEPTEMBER 18, 2009

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (U) Mission Nigeria provides the following compilation of recent political, economic, and social developments not reported previously.

ANAMBRA STATE VOTER REGISTRATION ENCOUNTERS PROBLEMS

12. (SBU) The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) sponsored voter registration during a three-day period in early September in Anambra State to prepare for the February 2010 gubernatorial election, as voters must register again before each election. Businessmen in Onitsha complained to PolOff September 10 of serious problems encountered by voters trying to register. While many voters took off from work to register and in some cases waited in long lines, INEC workers arrived hours late at several stations. Shortly after starting, equipment used to register voters (lap-top computers connected to cameras) reportedly failed, forcing INEC officials to transport them to the state capital Awka for repairs. When they returned, however, INEC officials announced that it was too late to continue, and they did not set a new date for registration. The businessmen told PolOff that many citizens suspect they will not have another opportunity to register.

AC SEEKS TO ANNUL RESULTS OF SENATORIAL ELECTION

13. (SBU) Action Congress (AC) candidate Olubunmi Adetunbi presented a 150-page petition September 14 urging the Ekiti election tribunal to nullify the declared victory of People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Ayo Arise in the August 15 re-run of the senatorial election. This re-run had occurred after the Federal Appeals Court nullified results from the initial April 2007 election, in which INEC had also declared Arise as the winner. The AC alleged numerous irregularities that violated electoral law provisions and accused INEC of fielding known PDP agents as presiding officers at polling stations. Separately, the Ekiti tribunal has another AC petition under review seeking nullification of declared results from the May 25 gubernatorial by-election. Ekiti State AC spokesperson Yemi Adaramodu told Political Specialist that legal challenges remained the only mechanism for AC to use to prevent those seeking to retain power via from compromising the electoral process.

CENTRAL BANKER TRIES TO CALM STOCK MARKET JITTERS

14. (SBU) Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor Sanusi Lamido

Sanusi pledged support for the Nigerian stock market's recovery. Addressing stockbrokers and investors during his September 16 visit to the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) trading floor -- the first by any CBN Governor -- Sanusi stated that lack of capital and liquidity caused the CBN to take control of five banks. He ruled out further sanctions against bank executives on the scale of the August purge, but emphasized that the CBN will monitor banks closely to foster confidence among depositors and investors. A stockbroker told us that the Governor's visit became imperative, given the increased significance of the banks to the NSE after bank consolidation, but Sanusi's visit did little to allay brokers' fears regarding the banks' treatment of margin loans.

USAID CLEAN WATER

15. (U) USAID's Water and Development Alliance team recently completed a start-up workshop for a new water project in Enugu State. Activities began with advocacy to public and private sectors within the state. The team, consisting of USAID, Coca Cola, the Africa Foundation, and the Society for Family Health, met with stakeholders and visited communities with urgent needs for water and sanitation services. The alliance plans to provide clean water and sanitation infrastructure, including piped water, bore holes, latrine facilities, point-of-use capability to disinfect water, and improved sanitation and hygiene practices, for schools and health centers in three communities with 120,000 beneficiaries.

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USAID HELPS WITH DRAFT TRADE POLICY

16. (U) USAID and the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) co-sponsored a workshop September 9 to 10 to review the GON draft of its Nigeria Industrial and Trade Policy. Over 100 participants from the private sector, government, civil society, development partners, and academia attended the workshop. Participants recommended setting clear mechanisms to implement and monitor trade policies; promoting regular and institutionalized stakeholder reviews; strengthening Nigerian industry's capacity to access regional markets; reducing constraints to transportation; and streamlining import and export processes. Delegates emphasized the need to harmonize the policy with broader GON programs, the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), and other regional integration protocols. The workshop produced a road map to improve stakeholder input and use evidence-based information for policy setting.

USAID POLIO ERADICATION

17. (U) The USAID Global Health Bureau Polio Coordinator and senior USAID and CDC staff hosted a Polio Eradication Experts Review Committee meeting September 10 to 11 in Kaduna. The meeting included a review of immunization performance, discussions of key obstacles and constraints, a review of scientific evidence regarding the continued spread of wild polio virus beyond the bounds of the high risk states in northern Nigeria to previously polio-free zones. USAID officials emphasized the need to re-frame advocacy messages regarding the increased number of polio doses required to build up herd immunity, and pushed for a formal review to examine persistent weaknesses in communication and advocacy efforts. USAID encouraged publication in Nigerian newspapers of the names of state governors and local government chairmen who failed to adhere to Abuja Declaration agreements reached during Bill Gates, February visit to Nigeria, a

recommendation resoundingly supported by key government counterparts and other participants. This year, 370 children from 26 states have suffered from paralysis caused by polio in Nigeria. While this number is about 40 percent fewer than the same time last year, the level of unprotected children remains dangerously high. Since 2008, Nigerian polio cases have contributed to outbreaks in 15 countries in Africa and Asia.

GON SEEKS TO DISPEL RUMOR OF US MILITARY HELP IN NIGER DELTA

¶18. (C) Nigeria's Ministry of Information and Communication issued a public statement September 14 dismissing rumors in local media that the USG promised during the Secretary's visit to help Nigeria fight militants in the Niger Delta. Despite this statement, PolOff received a September 15 electronic-mail message from Tony Uranta (United Niger Delta Energy Development and Security Strategy spokesperson and member of the 2008 Niger Delta Presidential Committee) claiming that the U.S. intended to deploy defense contractor "mercenaries" as advisors to the Joint Task Force to aid the military's "onslaught" against Ijaws and Niger Deltans after the October 4 amnesty deadline.

NIGERIA RECORDS 370,000 NEW HIV INFECTIONS ANNUALLY

¶19. (SBU) According to the Nigerian National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), about 370,000 Nigerians become infected with the HIV virus each year. Of the estimated three million Nigerians living with the virus, only about 350,000 access treatment. NACA estimates that about 850,000 additional people require anti-retroviral treatment. NACA Director General Professor John Idoko indicated that increased prevention is needed, noting that, for every two persons on treatment, five new infections occurred. As of the end of March, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program directly supported some 238,000 persons on treatment.

¶10. (U) Embassy and Consulate General Lagos collaborated on this telegram.

MCCULLOUGH